

## § 15.51

be the time of receipt for processing purposes.

(c) A determination by the General Counsel or the Field Assistant General Counsel with respect to an appeal under § 15.61 shall be made within 20 working days after receipt of the appeal, and shall be communicated to the appellant, in writing.

(d) In unusual circumstances, the General Counsel, or the appropriate Field Assistant General Counsel, may extend the time limits prescribed in paragraphs (a) and (c) of this section, by written notice to the requester setting forth the reasons for the extension and the date on which a determination is expected to be dispatched. An extension shall not exceed ten working days. As used in this paragraph, unusual circumstances means that there is a need:

(1) To search for and collect the requested records from field facilities or other establishments that are separate from the office processing the request;

(2) To search for, collect, and examine appropriately a voluminous amount of separate and distinct records that are demanded in a single request; or

(3) For consultation, which shall be conducted with all practicable speed, with another agency having a substantial interest in the determination of the request, or among two or more organizational units of the Department having a substantial interest in the subject matter of the request.

[60 FR 11904, Mar. 3, 1995]

## Subpart F—Disclosure of Records and Refusal To Disclose

### § 15.51 Authority to release records or copies.

The Office of the Executive Secretariat in Headquarters and the FOIA liaisons in each Field Office are authorized to release copies of any Department records upon written request unless disclosure is clearly not appropriate under this part.

[60 FR 11904, Mar. 3, 1995]

### § 15.52 Authority to deny requests for records.

The officers described in § 15.51, or other official designated by the Secretary's Representative, may deny a

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request for a record only with the concurrence of the appropriate program counsel in Headquarters or counsel in the Field Offices. Any denial shall:

(a) Be made in writing, describing the documents denied and, if fewer than 21, listing them specifically;

(b) Contain a simple reason for the denial, stating the appropriate exemption used; and

(c) Advise of the right to appeal the adverse determination, in accordance with § 15.61, to the:

(1) General Counsel, with respect to a denial issued by the Office of Executive Secretariat or by offices in which there is a Field Assistant General Counsel; and

(2) Field Assistant General Counsel, with respect to a denial issued by Field Offices.

[60 FR 11904, Mar. 3, 1995]

### § 15.54 Business information.

(a) *In general.* Business information provided to the Department by a submitter shall not be disclosed pursuant to a FOIA request except in accordance with this section.

(b) *Definitions.* As used in this section:

*Business information* means commercial or financial information provided to the Department by a submitter that arguably is protected from disclosure under Exemption 4 (42 U.S.C. 552(b)(4)) of the Act.

*Submitter* means any person or entity who provides business information, directly or indirectly, to the Department. The term includes, but is not limited to, corporations, State governments, and foreign governments.

(c) *Designation of business information.* A submitter's claim that certain information is confidential or proprietary should be supported by a statement or certification by an officer or authorized representative of the submitter that the information is, in fact, confidential or proprietary and has not been disclosed to the public. All information considered confidential or proprietary by a submitter should be clearly designated with a prominent stamp, typed legend, or other suitable form of notice, stating "Confidential Treatment Requested by [insert name of submitter]", which should appear on

each page or segregable portion of the page. If such marking is impractical, a cover sheet prominently marked "Confidential Treatment Requested by [insert name of submitter]" should be securely attached to the information for which confidential treatment is requested. These designations shall be deemed to have expired 10 years after the date of the submission, unless the submitter requests, and provides reasonable justification for, a longer period of designation.

(d) *Notice to submitter.* To the extent permitted by law, the Department shall provide a submitter with prompt written notice of a FOIA request or administrative appeal encompassing its business information, unless notice is excused under paragraph (h) of this section. Such notice shall afford the submitter an opportunity to object to disclosure pursuant to paragraph (f) of this section. The notice shall either describe the exact nature of the business information requested or provide copies of the records or portions thereof containing the business information. The Department will provide this notice whenever:

(1) The information has been designated in good faith by the submitter as information deemed protected under Exemption 4; or

(2) The Department has reason to believe that the information may be protected from disclosure under Exemption 4.

(e) *Notice to requester.* At the same time the Department notifies the submitter, the Department shall also notify the requester that the request is subject to the provisions of this section and that the submitter is being afforded an opportunity to object to disclosure of the information.

(f) *Opportunity to object to disclosure.* Through the notice described in paragraph (d) of this section, the Department shall afford a submitter or its designee 10 Federal working days to provide the Department a detailed written statement of the submitter's objection to disclosure of any portion of the information it submitted to the Department. Such statement shall specify all grounds for withholding any of the information and shall demonstrate why the information is a

trade secret or commercial or financial information that is privileged or confidential. Conclusory statements that particular information would be useful to competitors or would impair sales, or similar statements, generally will not be considered sufficient to justify confidential treatment. Information provided by a submitter or its designee pursuant to this paragraph may itself be subject to disclosure under the FOIA.

(g) *Notice of intent to disclose.* The Department shall consider carefully a submitter's objections and specific grounds for nondisclosure, before determining whether to disclose business information. If the Department decides to disclose business information over the objection of a submitter, the Department shall forward to both the submitter and the requester a written notice of intent to disclose. The written notice shall be forwarded 10 Federal working days before the specified disclosure date and shall include:

(1) A statement of the reasons for which the submitter's disclosure objections were not sustained;

(2) A description of the business information to be disclosed; and

(3) A specified disclosure date.

(h) *Exceptions to the notice requirement.* The notice requirements of paragraphs (d) and (g) of this section shall not apply if:

(1) The Department determines that the information should not be disclosed;

(2) The information has been published lawfully or has been made available officially to the public;

(3) Disclosure of the information is required by law (other than the Act);

(4) Disclosure of the information is required by a departmental regulation that:

(i) Was adopted pursuant to notice and public comment;

(ii) Specifies narrow classes of records submitted to the Department that are to be released under the FOIA; and

(iii) Provides for notice in exceptional circumstances when the submitter provides, at the time the information is submitted or a reasonable time thereafter, written justification that disclosure of the information

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could reasonably be expected to cause substantial competitive harm;

(5) The information requested was not designated by the submitter as exempt from disclosure in accordance with paragraph (c) of this section at the time of the submission of the information or a reasonable time thereafter, unless the Department has substantial reason to believe that the disclosure of the information would cause competitive harm; or

(6) The designation made by the submitter in accordance with paragraph (c) of this section appears obviously frivolous. In such circumstances, the Department shall forward to the submitter, 10 Federal working days before a specified disclosure date, written notice of any final administrative decision to disclose business information.

(i) *Notice of FOIA lawsuit.* Whenever a requester brings suit seeking to compel disclosure of business information, the Department shall promptly notify the submitter.

(j) *Determination of confidentiality.* HUD will make no determination as to the validity of any request for confidentiality until a request for disclosure of the information is received.

(k) *Current mailing address for the submitter.* Each submitter shall provide to the Department:

(1) A mailing address for receipt of any notices under this section; and

(2) Notice of any change of address.

(l) *Treatment of confidential information by HUD employees.* (1) HUD officers and employees shall not, directly or indirectly, use or allow the use of business information obtained through or in connection with Government employment that has not been made available to the general public.

(2) Except as otherwise provided in this section, HUD officers and employees may not disclose business information, except to other HUD officers or employees who are properly entitled to such information for the performance of their official duties.

[60 FR 11904, Mar. 3, 1995]

## 24 CFR Subtitle A (4-1-00 Edition)

### Subpart G—Administrative Review of Denial of Requests for Records

#### § 15.61 Administrative appeal.

(a) Appeal shall be available only from a written denial of a request issued under § 15.52, and only when the appeal is filed within 30 days of issuance of the denial. An appeal from a denial issued by the Office of Executive Secretariat or by offices in which there is a Field Assistant General Counsel must be mailed to the Assistant General Counsel for Training and Administrative Law, Room 10246, 451 Seventh Street, SW, Washington, DC, 20410. An appeal from a denial issued by a Field Office must be mailed to the appropriate Field Assistant General Counsel. An appeal must include a copy of the original request for records; a copy of the written denial of access to those records, and a statement of the reasons, circumstances, or arguments advanced in support of, or in opposition to, disclosure of the records. The envelope containing the appeal should be clearly marked as a Freedom of Information Act appeal, so that the Department can comply with the time limitations set forth in § 15.42.

(b) When an appeal is misdirected by the requester, the Office receiving the appeal shall:

(1) Promptly refer it to the:

(i) Assistant General Counsel for Training and Administrative Law, if the denial was issued by the Office of Executive Secretariat or by an office in which there is a Field Assistant General Counsel, or

(ii) Appropriate Field Assistant General Counsel, if the denial was issued by a Field Office; and

(2) Advise the appellant that the time of receipt for processing purposes will be the time the appeal is received by the appropriate office.

(c) The appeal determination shall be in writing; constitute final administrative action by the Department; and, if the denial is upheld in full or in part, include notification of the right to judicial review.

[60 FR 11905, Mar. 3, 1995]